

THE
STRONG-BOX OPENED;

O'R,

A Fund found at Home,
H. Inland People of
For the immediate EMPLOYMENT of our PEOPLE,

and for preventing

EMIGRATION.

Inscribed to D-N-S D-LY, Esq.

DUBLIN:

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STANDARD OF PAPER

A Good Standard

OUR PEOPLE



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DEDICATION
To D-N-s D-Ly, Esq.

SIR,

AN enlarged and generous mind cannot (I conceive) be displeased to be looked up to, and called upon, to patronize a scheme of national improvement. In this country especially the gentleman of family and fortune, and not of profession, who shews a disposition and abilities to conduct public measures upon a truly wise and extensive plan, naturally attracts the attention, esteem, and affectionate regards of the nationally-warm Irish heart: we approach him with a kind of proprietary confidence, as if we had a claim of right to his protection, and feel ourselves some how discharging our debt of gratitude by calling upon him for further support.

From such motives solely, Sir, I have presumed to prefix your name to the following certainly-well-intended project, for
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the immediate employment of our people. As its avowed purpose is to erect the industrious farmer into a respectable yeoman, it will certainly have to encounter the prejudices and strong lungs of all that irascible class of Little Esquires, the doubtfulness of whose gentility renders them more tenacious of the claim, and more suspicious of being encroached upon by inferiors: but as the concurrence of such is no ways necessary to the completion of the design, their opposition I consider as of little consequence. It is the gentleman of real weight and property, and national influence, whom I anxiously wish to conciliate, and whose public-spirited feelings I earnestly solicit in the person, and, I trust, by the example of Mr. D-n-s D-ly; submitting entirely to his superior abilities the reasonableness, the practicability, and the expediency of the measure.

Examine it, Sir, consider it attentively with your piercing penetration and well-informed judgment. If you find it illiberal, insidious,

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insidious, or unjust in any particular, spurn it from you with the disdain which every such attempt would deserve. But if you candidly and deliberately decide the whole to be strictly just, liberal, and of extensive utility, (peculiarly in our present circumstances) permit me to observe, that there is no time to be lost in bringing it into effective operation.

For, Sir, the period cannot be very remote when our people, especially the more active and industrious, who have scraped together any little cash, will begin again to look Westward.—How are they to be prevented? You well know how triflingly ridiculous all laws must be to prevent Emigration: how absurd, in a country aiming at the character of commercial. How unwise, then, to have taken no step to prevent the evil, until it hath actually arrived!

In this train of thought, permit me, Sir, humbly to entreat your attention to the
idea

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idea here suggested. You may live to see a scene of industry, population, and general prosperity take place, which will give solid satisfaction to your generous mind to have set in motion and introduced into your native country. To me it will afford most sincere delight to have in any degree been the instrument of pointing Mr. D-ly's attention towards an object worthy (I will say) of his excellent abilities, as being productive in my firm persuasion of much immediate benefit and improvement to Ireland.

I am, Sir,

with very sincere respect and esteem,

Your obedient, humble servant,

POSTSCRIPT.

Left any gentleman should be alarmed at the novelty of the idea here started, let it be observed attentively, that there is nothing COMPULSORY in this whole design ;
nor,

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nor, I will be bold to say, any thing insidious. All that is desired is a law to PERMIT proprietors of land to grant such encouragement to improvement, as they shall find it their real interest to grant; and upon such terms as shall not injure the heirs in remainder. If it be asked, how shall the heir be secured against unfair collusion between the present possessor and lessees for ever? I answer by returning the question; how is he at present secured of land's being set at their full value? The remedy will be the same, and the law equally open in both cases.

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Now I will be bold to say that
 there is no other way to
 get the people to
 understand the situation
 and to take the necessary
 steps to bring about
 a change in the
 government. I am not
 saying this to
 encourage you to
 take any action
 but to show you
 that the only way
 to bring about
 a change in the
 government is
 to get the people
 to understand the
 situation and to
 take the necessary
 steps to bring
 about a change
 in the government.

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T H E

STRONG-BOX OPENED.

WHILST the heart of every Irishman is elated with the opening prospect of a **FREE TRADE**, and all the delightful effects of national industry, I hope it may not be altogether without use for a sincere well-wisher of his country, to endeavour to point out such means of exciting and encouraging a general spirit of improvement and manufactures, as appear to be immediately in **OUR OWN POWER**; and from the not exerting of which, much of our present indolence, and sloth, and misery have hitherto proceeded.

To set many hands to work at any manufacture, to furnish materials, instruments and instructors, &c. &c. can only be effected by considerable capitals, which I hope in time may be found, but which at present certainly are not to be had in this country. How then, in the interim, may many of our idle and wretched poor be put to work with such means as we are in possession of? The question surely is important; and to come to a satisfactory answer—

Let any gentleman (any man of common sense) ask himself, why do our miserable farmers, through most parts of the kingdom, now take up with such wretched huts (for houses they cannot be called), such scanty mean cloathing and food, and the want of every comfortable accommodation; loitering about their ill-fenced, unmanured, and in every respect neglected grounds, which they themselves know might be made much more valuable by a little additional labour, in draining, fencing, and planting
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a few common trees in any little corner that is protected from cattle? If slovenliness and unthriftiness be habitual to the Irish farmer, yet assuredly they are not natural. The common Irish are not deficient in understanding, nor in any of the natural motives which rouse to activity and exertion: but these very motives, natural acuteness, and all the selfish passions of pride and resentment, and even avarice, may upon a supposition of hard or unjust treatment, become the very causes of sloth, inactivity and despondency.

To speak more plainly, and, I believe, to state the real fact—If a man, placed on a little farm for a few years (by a short tenure) knows to a moral certainty that whatever he expends in improving the grounds or house or garden, be in fact employing so much labour or cash to raise the rent upon himself at the expiration of his short tenure,—so that when he exerts himself in any degree beyond what is unavoidable to procure the meanest necessities of existence,

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he is in fact working against his own interest, and for the advantage of an unfeeling land-lord, is it to be wondered if in such circumstances every feeling almost of the human mind counteract and dissuade from vigorous exertion; suggesting the spiteful, stubborn resolution of submitting to misery and filth, and every ill, rather than labour for the benefit of those who by the severity of law and custom, will take advantage of their industry.

Some well-intentioned people may think I carry this matter too far, and ask, What would I be at? would I have the land-holders in Ireland get better security or longer tenures of their lands than the English farmer, who exerts himself so successfully for his own and the public good?

~~A~~ A little patience, gentlemen, and perhaps we shall come to a better understanding. The English farmer receives a farmhouse and offices in good repair, and to be kept in like manner, at the expence of the land-lord; he enters upon a farm already divided,

divided, drained, fenced, and perhaps planted; and for the use of this, he pays such a rent as he finds upon calculation, will leave him such a proportion of the produce as shall be a reasonable return for all his expences in working and occupying that farm properly. At the end of his tenure, he returns the proprietor his own, just what he received, and no more; and in the mean time, the farm has done its full duty to the public, and to all parties.—Here, you see, all is fair, equal, and satisfactory; and no cause of complaint or discouragement to industry. If any man has an Irish farm to let, circumstanced alike, let him set it off in the same manner, and no one will object to it.

But what is the usual, the general case of the Irish farm, advertised to be let,—with the humane notice to the new tenant, that “no preference shall be given to the former occupant!”—Such cabins and fences as are usually found on such a farm, have been the work of the last tenant. If
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the new-comer will have a house, he must build it ; the same with respect to offices. —If the land is to be rendered productive by drains, fences, and manures—all this must be done by the tenant ; for in plain language, the proprietor generally is not able to do it : he is probably loaded with debts, so as not even to be able to assist his tenant.

Now, in the name of common sense and common honesty, how is such land to be improved; or brought to that value which it ought to produce to the public, the owner, and the tenant?

Every man who has turned his thoughts towards the subject, will see the conclusion I would draw : but before I come to that, I wish (in opposition to the ignorant prejudices of every nation newly emerging out of barbarism) to suggest to the natural good sense of my countrymen, that the justest idea of the value of landed property, even in fee, is, that land is a mark of value,

value, like every other merchandize, varying in price according to the market or demand for it. If the price of land be less apt to vary suddenly than that of other commodities, it has the peculiar inconvenience of being less easily brought to market, from the nature of title deeds, &c. and altho' Irish Gentlemen were long accustomed to consider their land as a constantly rising property, some late experience must surely have convinced them, that an estate may fall in value as well as income; and in fact, that no species of property is more exposed to the influence of many accidents.

I know the good old ladies of every family are very happy in recounting for how many generations the estate has continued in the family; and the young 'squire is not a little elated at the thought that he can ride thro' so many miles of almost waste grounds and mountain, without meeting a man who has any other than a determinable lease. It really is not easy to adapt arguments

arguments to such understandings : but I would wish to represent to both (as pretty much on a level in point of capacity and information) that if the estate be under settlement as usual, no one person of their family so circumstanced has ever been better than an annuitant for life ; and that instead of having a fortune of so many years' income as the lands would sell for, the 'squire's whole property amounts to no more than he could get for an annuity for his particular life :—a matter he will soon learn when he comes to want a few hundred pounds, for which he generally sells at between five and six years purchase. So that, good madam, if the rent-roll of your father's settled estate was 1000l. per year, his intire property never exceeded 6000l. however you may have been used to consider it as 25,000l. or perhaps more. Men of sense cannot sufficiently scout such absurd prejudices, which are a principal means at this day of keeping a considerable part of the positive capital of the nation locked

locked up by the foolish vanity of ignorant ancestors.

It is in truth lamentable to see many well-informed, liberal-minded gentlemen, who are well disposed to improve, and to encourage improvements around them, absolutely incapacitated from both, by the wicked and senseless avarice and pride of predecessors. Surely a well-judging patriotic parliament cannot be better employed than in removing such restraints upon public industry and national improvement, especially if it may be done (as I apprehend it may) without counteracting the only rational intention of such settlements, that of bequeathing a certain property to the last person in remainder. This, I conceive, may be done to the great encouragement of every improving tenant, to the considerable advantage of the present proprietor, and to the certain benefit of the public, in a compound proportion of the two former, by some such regulation as the following :

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Let all proprietors of land be enabled by act of parliament, to grant leases of lives renewable for ever, upon the tenant's either immediately paying an advanced rent of the difference in value between a lease of 31 years (which we will suppose the present powers by settlement) and a lease for ever; or paying at the fall of every life such a fine as shall be an equivalent for the above difference. In either case the value is easily calculated, and is at present very well known; and I will be bold to say, that as far as this alteration of tenure takes place, all the advantages above-mentioned will certainly arise to the individual and the public.

I can foresee but two objections, both of which appear to me easy to be removed:—The first, that the tenure of lives renewable, is at present a kind of disputable one; but I hope, for the sake of common justice and equity, (independent of our present question) that the disputed point of such leases will be settled by act of parliament

liament as soon as may be.—But 2dly, it may be objected that such tenures, instead of encouraging industry and improvement as here stated and presumed, may possibly have the very opposite effect, by erecting our farmers into a kind of Little Gentry, the most useless and contemptible of all human beings. To which I reply candidly, that this (like every other system of human policy) may possibly be abused and perverted : but that most sincerely I am not apprehensive of this abuse happening frequently. At present, indeed, any thing of an independent man, who can call some acres in any degree his own, is apt to be foolishly elated with the (certainty now great) difference between himself and the poor wretches around him ; but suppose this distinction abolished in many instances, and real freeholds of thirty, forty, fifty, &c. &c. acres to become frequent,—let common sense decide what the probable consequence shall be with respect to the improvement of such grounds, and the industry of their occupiers.

And

And shall such leſſees be allowed to alienate, and to ſet at advanced rents as they ſhall think fit to a number of beggars and cottagers, who will tear up and harraſs the grounds ? Moſt aſſuredly : let them ſet and reſet ; and if you be wiſe, rejoice at their bringing additional hands, and encouraging the populouſneſs of the eſtate. Make yourſelf ſure of your firſt rent, by your claufe of re-entry upon non-payment of either rent or fine, and my life on't you ſhall ever find yourſelf a conſiderable gainer, if any ſuch freeholder ſhould ſuffer his land to fall back into your hands.

But what is likely to be the real conſequence of ſuch powers being granted to all the preſent proprietors of land : Gentlemen will not be in a hurry, or very raſh, in granting leaſes for ever, but upon very good reaſons, and in caſes of probable improvement. The tenant who has already thriven by his induſtry, and who ſeems likely to build and plant, &c. upon further

encouragement, and who is desirous to purchase this encouragement, either by a present rise of rent, or the payment of a proportional fine at the fall of every life.

The citizen or shop-keeper who wishes to retire with a little cash to a green sod; the subaltern officer who has converted his commission into money, and is desirous to try his hand at farming; all the present adventurers who are for retiring to America with some money, might, I should hope, find it their interest, upon the plan proposed, to try their hands in Ireland; to lay out their fortunes and their industry upon their native soil, to the certain advantage of themselves, and the country in general.

But the mention of America makes it necessary to speak very plain.—Whence comes it in fact, that the Irish gentleman is so averse to grant any thing like an independent livelihood to any creature under him?

him ? Why does he often submit to the miserable, contemptible situation of a persecuted, sculking debtor, rather than part with a few of those acres, the sale of which would relieve many honest men his creditors, and make himself feel comfortable and independent?—The plain fact is, he wishes and hopes to retain so many dependent voters ; and he will submit to live in wretchedness and infamy, &c. &c. rather than part with the insolent, tyrannic reflection, that he has so many miscreants whom he can oppress and beggar, unless they vote and swear at next election as he shall direct.

I have stated this as the fact ;—every reader is free to judge whether he will allow it : but taking it for granted at present, upon what grounds of equity or common sense can any such landlord dissuade the young tenant, who has scraped together a few guineas, from seeking a better settlement in some other climate, however remote?—Do you think yourselves

selves, gentlemen, so much more acute and apprehensive than your tenants, as to perceive their true interest better than themselves? Be assured you are not : in no one instance does the toe of the peasant tread so close upon the courtier's heel, as in discerning his present profit.

Necessity, infirmities, and old prejudices may retain the necessitous, the infirm and ignorant at home in their accustomed wretchedness ; but take it for granted, and remember it has been proclaimed thus publicly to you, that your most active, most industrious, and most opulent tenants will gradually desert, unless you hold forth better encouragement than heretofore to their efforts and enlightened industry.

You have cried out, you have acted as men against the impolitic restraints and oppressions of England ; But was this all for yourselves—for the few landed gentry among us ? And is the miserable Irish tenant to drudge on in the same wretched
smoaky



smoaky hovel, without cloths, without bread,—not so well fed or lodged as the swine of other countries, and afraid to work or improve, lest he should raise his rent?

You know this to be the case, gentlemen, and I pledge myself that it shall be re-echoed until it be in some degree remedied, or at least put in a possible state of relief.—I shall not here introduce one of those wretches pleading his own cause, which I assure you most of them can do very forcibly: at present, I shall content myself with encountering that single motive (that cursed desire of savage despotism) which perverts the otherwise humane hearts of my countrymen.

21. Look around you then candidly, upon any real trial of interests at any election; who are the tenants that adhere to, and support, and enter warmly into the interests and honour of their landlords? Are they not the most decent, most comfortable, most inde-

independent persons on your estates? And on the other hand, of whom are you generally and justly suspicious, lest they should desert you, and be seduced by an opponent? Consider this candidly, I beseech you, and do not think so ill of yourselves, as that generous motives are not the most sacred ties upon human nature.

But to put this matter as it ought to be stated to men of sense: You wish to hand down a considerable county influence to your son, and the question is how to effect this; whether by keeping a set of wretches starving, and dependent, and in debt to you, and therefore forced to vote as you please, without presuming to exert a possible wish of their own; or by the liberal conduct of enriching, and obliging, and binding the hearts and consciences of a number of real freemen, made such by your generosity and good sense.

Now, look around you again impartially to the several counties of this kingdom for

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some years past, and do not take the reports of particular men or parties, but examine fairly who are the persons that possess the hearts and inclinations, and meet with the real support of their country—and surely there is no occasion to urge this argument further.

It is true, the kind of influence I speak of requires some degree of merit, a moderate degree of good sense and good conduct, and a general fairness of character, to establish an interest among the yeomanry; but if any parent can think it a disadvantage to his son to be bound by additional motives to such conduct and behaviour, I really know not how to reason with such. You would wish, I dare say, to use the votes of your tenants as your ancestors did the family estates,—to bind and settle them on your issue and heirs however undeserving: but the nature of things, and still more our circumstances, no longer admit of this. If the looby must needs have a certain feat, send him up; but if you wish him to represent

present freemen, let him endeavour to deserve it.

But this point has detained me longer than I intended. My main, and indeed my single object, is to point out to gentlemen, that there is at this instant a fund of wealth in Ireland, LOCKED UP by absurd settlements, which might be brought into immediate use (without injuring the most remote heir in remainder a single farthing) to the certain employment of many useful hands, the undoubted improvement of our waste, or poorly cultivated lands, the encreasing the present incomes of our landed gentry, the consumption and encouragement of every species of manufacture, and above all, the preventing the emigration (no one can say of how many) of our most useful and valuable citizens, who I will be bold to affirm, are upon the wing, and not to be detained at home by any other means I have ever yet heard proposed.

This seems to me an object deserving the
attention

attention of gentlemen who have proved themselves truly attentive to the real interests of their country, and too enlightened to despise information, (if useful) on account of the obscurity from whence at present it proceeds.—There may be objections which have not occurred to me: but I can honestly assert, that I know none other than what I have stated and considered as impartially as I could: If any gentleman sees others, and will propose them candidly, he shall have my real sentiments with all the good manners I am master of. In the mean time, I have the happiness of thinking that I have started a useful truth which will make its way however gradually, and conciliate the patronage and support of the liberal well-wishers and friends of Ireland.

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